



INDEX OF TEXAS ARCHAEOLOGY

Open Access Gray Literature from the Lone Star State

Volume 2021

Article 3

2021

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Cite this Record

Sabo, George III; Trubitt, Mary Beth; and Cande, Kathy (2021) "Ann M. Early's Contributions to Caddo Archeology," *Index of Texas Archaeology: Open Access Gray Literature from the Lone Star State*: Vol. 2021, Article 3. ISSN: 2475-9333

Available at: <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ita/vol2021/iss1/3>

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Ann M. Early's Contributions to Caddo Archeology

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Ann M. Early's Contributions to Caddo Archeology

George Sabo III, Mary Beth Trubitt, and Kathy Cande

Arkansas Archeological Survey

Following a 48-year career at the Arkansas Archeological Survey, Dr. Ann M. Early retired in June 2020. In this short essay, we highlight her extensive contributions to the archeology of the Caddo area and her research on the culture history of the Caddo people in and south of the Ouachita Mountains.

Ann Early joined the Arkansas Archeological Survey (ARAS) in 1972 as research station archeologist at Henderson State University (HSU) in Arkadelphia, following completion of her PhD degree in anthropology at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Her dissertation examined the Upper Mississippian occupation of the Fox River valley in Illinois. In 1999, Ann succeeded Hester A. Davis as Arkansas's State Archeologist and served in that position in Fayetteville until her retirement.

Ann's initial foray into studying the archeology of the region involved examination of archival, artifact collection, and literature sources to develop a series of chronologically ordered Caddo settlement models for the Ouachita River basin, poorly known at the time (Early 1982). A contemporaneous CRM survey and testing project along the Caddo River provided an opportunity to further explore those models, including the first investigations of novaculite quarrying as one prominent element of Caddo land use patterns in the Ouachita Mountains (Early and Limp 1982). Her first major excavation project, designed in part to refine those models, took place at the Standridge site (3MN53), where she supervised excavations conducted in 1975 and 1976 as part of Arkansas Archeological Society training programs and University of Arkansas archeological field schools. Initially considered a minor habitation site, Ann documented a fourteenth- to mid-fifteenth-century shift from residential occupation to service as a local socioreligious center featuring specialized buildings used for ritual performances (Early 1988).



Figure 1. Dr. Ann M. Early, 2016 (Arkansas Archeological Survey photograph).

In 1978, ARAS was invited by the National Park Service (NPS) to develop one of the first "State Plans" for archeological site conservation and research, as part of the NPS Resource Protection Planning Process, an early response to 1960s-era federal historic preservation legislation. Ann Early and Frank Schambach (then the station archeologist at ARAS-Southern Arkansas University) teamed up to synthesize the existing literature and develop a research agenda for the southwest Arkansas study unit (Schambach and Early 1982). When ARAS was invited in 1984 to develop a series of cultural resource overviews intended to cover the entirety of the multi-state Southwest District of the US Army Corps of Engineers, Ann joined George Sabo III (then the station archeologist at ARAS-University of Arkansas Fayetteville) to develop



Figure 2. Ann Early at transit with Mark Raab and Burney McClurken, Standridge site, 1976 (Arkansas Archeological Survey photograph).

the volume devoted to the Ozark and Ouachita Mountain regions of Arkansas and Oklahoma. In this volume, Sabo and colleagues (1990) applied a novel “adaptation type” framework for synthesizing regional information on cultural sequences. Both studies continue to serve as important general references for those areas.

In 1986, the Arkansas Department of Transportation discovered an extensive distribution of archeological materials within the right-of-way of a bridge replacement along Saline Bayou in the Ouachita River valley. Verification of the significance of the site via test excavations led to a rare opportunity to investigate the Hardman site (3CL418) in its entirety. The farmstead—containing dwellings and numerous work areas with support facilities surrounded by a light fence or palisade—was occupied ca. AD 1400–1700. A major series of features included several hearths used in salt making. The project report (Early, ed. 1993) not only provided major refinements to the local cultural sequence but also produced the first major investigation

contextualizing Caddo salt making within community settlement and subsistence organization. Later, as part of another bridge replacement project, she analyzed ceramic artifacts following excavations at the Helm site (3HS449; Lafferty et al. 2000).

Further research in the Ouachita Mountains included a 1995 project focused on a cluster of sites in the Winding Stair recreational area of the Ouachita National Forest (ONF). This work, supported by a cost-share agreement between ARAS, the ONF, and the Arkansas Archeological Society, involved Forest Service and Survey staff and Society volunteers during the June training program. Excavations at 3MN496 uncovered the remains of a late fifteenth-century building that closely resembled Fort Coffee phase buildings in the Arkansas River valley (Early, ed. 2000). The burned structure also exhibited architectural as well as use-history evidence comparable to ritual structures excavated two decades earlier at Standridge. In 1996, Ann coordinated a cost-share agreement between the ONF and ARAS to develop



Figure 3. Ann Early in the field in Ouachita County, 1987 (Arkansas Archeological Survey photograph).

a detailed research design for investigating novaculite quarry sites in the southern Ouachita Mountains. Quarry experts came together for discussions and field trips, and the novaculite research design was later published in *The Arkansas Archeologist* (Trubitt et al. 2004). As an expert in the archeology of this region, Ann contributed a chapter to the Smithsonian Institution's *Handbook of North American Indians* (Early 2004).

In addition to her extensive list of projects centering on Caddo settlement and subsistence organization in and near the Ouachita Mountains, Ann Early directed a significant part of her research to the study of Caddo ceramics. While at HSU, she oversaw the curation and management of the HSU Museum, including its collection of artifacts from Caddo sites in southwest Arkansas. In addition, after the Joint Educational Consortium (JEC), made up of Henderson State and Ouachita Baptist universities in Arkadelphia, acquired the Hodges Collection in 1977, she curated it as well. That collection included some 1,300 whole or reconstructed ceramic vessels, and she was able to provenience many of these to archeological sites in Clark and Hot Spring counties (Early 1986). As part of her long-time examination of these and other

Caddo decorated ceramics, Ann reconstructed a series of “grammars” or rule-based procedures that track the application of decorative variations aligning with discrete communities. Perhaps the best example of this analysis is reflected in her study of 251 Friendship Engraved *variety Freeman* carinated bowls from the HSU Museum and JEC Hodges collections (Early 2012). Ann worked for many years with colleague Frank Schambach to develop the “descriptive” (or “collegiate”) system for classifying Caddo ceramic decorative treatments that occur systematically on specific areas of vessel surfaces. It has been applied in several specific studies (e.g., Early 1988; Early, ed. 1993, 2000; Kelley 1997; Schambach 1990; see also Early and Trubitt 2021), and Ann and Mary Beth Trubitt are finalizing the comprehensive analytic guide to this system for publication.

Venturing into the realm of ethnohistoric studies, Ann Early contributed overviews of Caddos in the Trans-Mississippi South (Early 2000) and the French-Chickasaw War in the Mississippi River Valley (Early 2011). Ann's participation in two other large



Figure 4. Ann Early and Robert Cast document Arkansas pottery collections at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, 2010 (Arkansas Archeological Survey photograph).



Figure 5. Ann Early with colleagues at the Caddo Iconography Workshop, 2017 (Arkansas Archeological Survey photograph).

scale, collaborative efforts deserve mention. During the 1980s and 1990s, Charles Hudson (University of Georgia) and a large team of colleagues undertook a major effort to reexamine the route of Hernando de Soto's 1539–1543 expedition through the Southeast and the Spanish interactions with numerous Indigenous communities (Hudson 1997). Ann contributed to the route reconstruction in Ouachita Mountains, where a major series of encounters took place between the Spaniards and Caddo communities (Early 1993). A recent project of note is her contributions to the ARAS-UAF research station's long-term investigation of the Carden Bottoms site (3YE25) in the Arkansas River valley, an early seventeenth-century coalescent village that included some households whose ancestry traces to Caddo groups in the Ouachita Mountains region (Sabo et al. 2020).

Beyond research, Ann Early contributed extensively to other programs at the ARAS and at many other institutions and agencies. She developed and taught anthropology courses at Henderson State University while stationed in Arkadelphia. In Fayetteville, she mentored University of Arkansas graduate students and served on thesis and dissertation committees. As State Archeologist from 1999 to 2020, Ann consulted regularly and extensively with state agencies, including the Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, the Arkansas Forestry Commission, the Arkansas Department of Transportation, and the Central Arkansas

Library System. She worked closely with federal agencies with Arkansas programs, including the US Army Corps of Engineers, the USDA Forest Service, and the National Park Service. One of Ann's most noteworthy achievements as State Archeologist was managing a series of projects funded by grants awarded by the National Park Service's national NAGPRA office to complete the repatriation process for all subject materials in ARAS collections.

Professional service was an important component of Ann Early's long career. She was a decades-long member of the Society for American Archaeology's Committee on Public Archaeology and, as part of her long-term interests in combatting pseudoscience, she also contributed to the SAA Committee on Creationism. She represented the Arkansas State Division of the American Association of University Women. Ann served elected terms as President of the National Association of State Archaeologists, the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, and the Arkansas Historical Association. She also served on the Arkansas Humanities Council, the Historic Preservation Alliance, and the State Review Board for Historic Preservation. Ann organized the Caddo Conferences held in Arkadelphia in 1974, 1979, and 1998. Over the years, she contributed papers at many Caddo Conferences, published articles in the journal (Early 1991; Early and Trubitt 2003), and helped to compile the *Caddoan Bibliography* (Perttula et al. 1999).

Ann Early has been the recipient of honors awarded by the Arkansas Archeological Survey, the Arkansas Archeological Society, the Arkansas Historical Association, the Historic Preservation Alliance, the Caddo Nation, the US Forest Service, and the National Association of State Archaeologists. Here, we honor Ann as she retires from the Arkansas Archeological Survey, we thank her for her contributions to a better understanding of Caddo history, and we wish her a happy retirement.

Note

A version of this essay appeared on the Arkansas Archeological Survey's website in 2020 as "Ann M. Early ARAS Career Highlights."

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Figure 6. Ann Early giving an Arkansas Archeology Month talk, Hot Springs, 2019 (Arkansas Archeological Survey photograph).